

# Turkish Albanian Macedonian Relations

Past, Present and Future

Eds: Mehmet Bulut & Mesut Idriz



ADAM-ACTOR



# **TURKISH - ALBANIAN MACEDONIAN RELATIONS Past, Present and Future**

Editors

*Mehmet Bulut & Mesut Idriz*

ADAM-ACTOR 2012

*Ankara Center for Thought and Research (ADAM/ACTOR), Publications  
İlkadım Mah. Yeşil Vadi sok. No: 13/A Dikmen/Ankara, Turkey*

*With the collaboration of International Balkan University (IBU), Skopje,  
Macedonia and the sponsorship of Turkish International Cooperation and  
Development Agency (TİKA).*

## ***TURKISH - ALBANIAN MACEDONIAN RELATIONS***

*Past, Present and Future*

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*ISBN: 978-605-88676-2-8*

*Turkey*

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# PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF TURKISH-ALBANIAN- MACEDONIAN RELATIONS

## INTRODUCTION

As a consequence of its geopolitical position, through the ages, Turkish-Albanian-Macedonian relations displayed a distinct historical, cultural, and socio-economic homogeneity. A history of these regions in general is an inseparable part of the Eastern and the Western history and civilizations. The common legal, socio-economic and cultural history is documented and preserved in millions of written records presently kept in various archives throughout Turkey and the Balkan countries. The documented sources which deal with the Turkish, Albanian and Macedonian communities are primarily the Ottoman archival materials, where the judicial records (*qāḍī sijil*) are considered the primary ones. The court *sijils* constitute an extensive collection and, are in general, perhaps the most important source for information about social life and actual legal status of various communities under Ottoman rule.

While studying the process of Islamization in the Albanian and Macedonia territories in the past, three points need to be remembered. Firstly, the people of these regions, both Muslims and non-Muslims, lived for centuries together side by side in villages and towns. Secondly, the impact of Ottoman institutions, laws and legal infrastructure in society as a whole was great. Finally, a sophisticated Ottoman culture that was being perceived and emulated as being a “prestige culture”

by the native peoples inevitably had an impact on the local culture as well, and consequently on religion itself. All these factors, as Halil Inalcik claims, were the channels of “acculturation” in the Balkans, and not “assimilation”.<sup>1</sup> However, it is not right to assume that only the native peoples were impacted by the Ottomans, for the Ottomans in turn borrowed and adopted various things from the local inhabitants, such as the methods of agriculture, norms relating to their daily routine and the arts.

Ottoman culture impacted strongly on language, the arts, and in general on the daily routine in the Balkans. This was the case with Macedonian and Albanian milieu. Thus, it may be said that with the domination by the Ottoman Empire, folk cultures of the Balkans were enriched by their association with the Ottoman-Muslim culture. The best testimony to this process of enrichment is the Balkan languages. There are literally a large number of Ottoman-Turkish (including Arabic and Persian) words which were borrowed by the Balkan languages. These words were, and still are, mostly used in daily social and cultural interactions, although the number of words may vary depending on the region.<sup>2</sup>

The present volume, comprising of fourteen chapters by contributions of various distinguished Turkish, Albanian and Macedonian academicians, is yet another work towards understanding the Turkish-Albanian-Macedonian relations by looking at the past, examining the present and assuming the future.

First three chapters of this work deal with the history, literature, arts, and scholarship. In the chapter one, the author tries to study and evaluates the current state of Islamic manuscripts available or that could be/are found in the present day Macedonia. Undoubtedly the Islamic manuscript and literature in the world is among the most significant field of study covering almost all the disciplines and subjects. These manuscript literatures are available in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries and their number are over a few million. Though

1 Halil Inalcik, “The Turks and the Balkans”, in *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, 1 (1993), pp. 26-27.

2 Mesut Idriz, *The Balkan City of Ottoman Manastir (Bitola)*, (Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk, 2010), pp. 250-275.



some of the institutions catalogued and even few digitized them, yet some of them lack inventory survey. And finally it offers some insight for future works that can be done in this area of the rich Islamic heritage.

In the chapter two, the authors address the collective identity status in the late Ottoman period, with specification on religious' and national identification of future Turkish, Albanian and Macedonian national projects. Through incorporation of historical facts and study of the modern theories of nationalism, the authors try to detect the stages of building the mentioned proto-nationalisms. Sharing the same institutional contexts in the Ottoman Empire makes similar patterns of late national identity constructions and production of certain aspects of mutual cultural heritage. The bases of this identity, according to the authors, are to be seen into the Ottoman millet system. The transformation of religious into national incorporates both basic models-territorial and ethno-linguistic, but the final national product mainly addresses on the second one. In the sense of Turkish identity there is contingent transformation of three powerful ideologies of 19<sup>th</sup> century-Pan-Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism with the final product of the modern secular Turkish nation. In the Macedonian example they also notice three ideological stages: Pan-Orthodoxy, Pan-Slavism and Nationalism in which in the last one it can be clearly noticed the political and proto-ethnic stages. The Albanian model example is combination of the previous two national project approaches and generates proto-national, and then national homogeneity through political exploitation of certain ethnic characteristics.

Chapter three deals with the history of Albanian literature, where the author surveys the prejudices surrounding the image of the 'Turk' in Albanian culture during communism, in the framework of the discourse of Orientalism. It takes as a case study the literary works of the renowned writer Ismail Kadare. It argues that Kadare, in his depiction of the Turk as archenemy of the Albanian nation, employed the clichés and stereotypes borrowed from the European Orientalist tradition, in which the Turks largely are presented as the barbaric mirror to Europe. The intended effect of the construction of 'Oriental Turk'

in Albanian literatures was to emphasize the modernity of Albanian socialist society and to ideologically justify the lonely road of Albanian communism, against "Asiatic" Russian and Chinese revisionists. These derogatory images of the 'Orient' and the 'Turk' continue to thrive in the public debates, despite the fact that such essentialist and exclusive viewpoints seem to be incompatible with building a democratic and open society and integrating Albania in a multicultural Europe. Theoretically, the author claims, Albanian version of Orientalism provides an interesting case, because it demonstrates that Orientalism is primarily a cultural discourse that persists in various contexts and has neither fixed geography, nor any fixed subjects and objects.

Chapters between four and six cover mainly with the challenges of the contemporary social history. Chapter four focuses on the interethnic relations in Macedonia, the coexistence between the Macedonians, Albanians and the Turkish up to date and the opportunities for improving their relations in terms of the current challenges. The author also touches the pro-active and critical approach on official policies regarding the activities, institutional support and positive legislation dedicated to this issue. In this regard, he includes a survey which include citizens of these three communities, where they express their opinions and concerns on the path towards a better future in Macedonia with equal opportunities for all and equal institutional treatment. Attention is paid to the obligations of Macedonia that arise in the path of integration in the European Union and efforts towards achieving European values in the cultivation of ethnic diversity.

The author of chapter five tackles the realities of present situation with reference to the Turkish-Albanian influences. Albanians as one of the cultural, ethnic, political and economic factor of Balkan Peninsula were part of Ottoman Empire and *Pax Ottomanica*. But after 1913 up to now they lived in different regimes and states, coping with crucial challenges of protecting the authentic code of ethnical and religious identity. Looking from nationalistic viewpoint the gained independence from a great power and choosed to form their own national state, but even after one century of "divorce", there is an emotional

link between Turks, Turkey and Albanians dispersed in six Balkan societies. However, the hard and unscrupulous anti-Ottoman and anti-Turk propaganda did not succeed to cut this invisible tie between this to nations. His arguments in his presentation is based on a empirical study, questionnaire applied in 2008-2009 with 571 respondents from Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo, including questions on knowledge of Turkish language, on perception of future of Turkey, meaning of Turkey for them, the best Balkan city, issue of sport, music, etc.

In chapter six, the author observes a very crucial issue of the free movement of workers, which is one of the four freedoms of the EU internal market. The migrant workers who move from one into another state enjoy certain rights stipulated by the EU Law (*acquis communautaire*). Her article uses an objective approach to make a comparison of the rights enjoyed by the workers from EU member states with the third country workers, in particular from Turkey and the Republic of Macedonia. In this direction, the primary goal of the author is to make an analysis of the Association Agreements signed between EU and Turkey as well as EU and the Republic of Macedonia, as a crucial legal act which regulates the status of the Turkish and the Macedonian workers in the EU. Therefore, special emphasis is given to the case law practice of the European Court of Justice following the signing of the Association Agreement by and between the European Union and Turkey. Furthermore, the article elaborates the issue of transitional arrangements which each new member state signs with the European Union regarding the transitional period for free movement of the workers.

Chapters between seven and eleven illustrates primarily the Turkish foreign policy towards the Balkan countries and Macedonia in particular, impact of globalization and integration, and cooperation. In chapter seven, the author believes that the issue of political, cultural and social relationship and cooperation amongst Turkey and the Western Balkans is a complex and a very broad issue that indeed requires more space and time in order to investigate thoroughly and observe scientifically. At the beginning he touches shortly on the historical dimension of Turkish politics as a sort of incentive for his

article. Then he continues with today's Turkey and its political and economical dimension towards the region of the Western Balkans. From the construction of his article it is evidently that his main intention is not to explain why Turkey should have a good political and economical relationship with the Western Balkans but rather why the countries within the Western Balkans should have a good relationship with Turkey on political, economical, cultural and social dimensions.

Chapter eight discusses the Balkans from the perspective of recent economic, social and geographical changes. The authors evaluate the current economic and trade relations among the countries of region, especially between the Balkans and Turkey. In this study trade potentials in the region are also analyzed. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, there have been serious conflicts, ethnic bloodshed and wars in the Balkans. According to the article, these problems poisoned the relations and cooperation among the Balkan countries. However, the Balkans has been involved in a process of transition, and many states have been formed or restructured in the region. Regional cooperation and integration have been increasing with many initiatives and desires for accession into EU. Also in the region, to some extent macro-economic stabilization, price and trade liberalization, privatization, and structural reforms have been achieved. Therefore, the authors assume that a new era for the region has begun, whereby they discuss the effects of the recent global financial crises on the region in a world that is getting more and more globalized.

In chapter nine, a very important and crucial issue is dealt, where the author based on the factual evidences and state official records reveals the Turkish-Macedonian cooperation in the fight against organized crime and terrorism in either region.

The effect of minority right on the political and economic transformation of the Balkans is a highly significant matter. Taking into consideration this important subject, the author of chapter ten explains this transformation with reference to Macedonia. Since 1991, from the day that Macedonia became an independent state, ethnic Albanians and other minorities were constitutionally remarked as second-class citizens, lacked equal socio-economic opportunities and were under-

represented in public administration. Matters changed dramatically after the civil war in 2001. Due to adequate international mediation, civil war was prevented and the position of the Albanian minority significantly improved. Macedonia's politics is characterized by ethnic politics, mistrust and nationalistic tendencies. He claims that a mental change is necessary in the political views of Macedonian and Albanian politicians. They should stand behind the implementation of the Ohrid agreement. The international community should remain actively involved in the decentralization process, as it would strengthen the position of the minority groups. He further claims that educational improvement is an absolute necessity in creating economic progress, equal opportunities and integration in Macedonian society. Inadequate standards of education of the ethnic minorities can lead to social exclusion and fuels radicalism. For that reason, the international community should promote and support intercultural dialogue through local projects organized by both local and international NGOs.

Chapter eleven focuses mainly on Turkish-Macedonian relations in the context of foreign policy vision of the ruling AK Party. Macedonia, being one of the most influential countries in the Balkans region and due to its geostrategic and geopolitical position, beginning from the 1990's established strong political relations with Turkey. In 1990's Turkish foreign policy apart from the development of bilateral relations was characterized by the support of various regional incentives in Balkans, in terms of enhancing the relations between the countries from the region and providing additional impulse in the spirit of development of Turkish – Macedonian relations. The author assumes that the new vision of Turkish foreign policy from 2000 onwards, that is mainly based on the *strategic depth doctrine*, had and is still having significant reflections on the diplomatic activities of this state in international equilibrium and in the countries of Balkans peninsula, including Macedonia. He further believes that as a result of this new concept of the Turkish foreign policy, Turkish – Macedonian relations are developed not only in the traditional scope (politics and defense), but these relations are characterized with in-depth economical and cultural collaboration.

Chapters between twelve and fifteen deal exclusively with the issues of economic investment and trade between Turkey and the Balkan countries with special focus on Macedonian and Albanian territories. The authors of these chapters unanimously believe that countries in the Western Balkan region offer huge potential for investment and trade, because these countries are either candidate or potential candidate countries for accession to the EU and have put European integration as the strategic priority.

In chapter twelve, the author gives some detailed illustrations on the investment opportunities in the Balkans as the EU is the region's biggest trading partner. Moreover, Free Trade Agreement in the South East European region known as CEFTA was signed in 2006 between Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldavia, Serbia and Montenegro defining unique free trade zone in this region and substituting all bilateral agreements applied previously. This agreement aims to create free trade area including modern issues as competition, government procurement and intellectual property rights within single system of rules. In fact, CEFTA serves as a preparation to country for full EU membership. Albania has potential in tourism, energy and agriculture sectors. Tourism, agriculture and food processing industry, automotive, mining and metal processing, energy, wood and transport sectors offer investment potential in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatia as most advanced country in the region has developed tourism and it is one of fastest growing economic sectors creating employment opportunities. Textile and shoes are important part of Macedonian economy and exports of these sectors account for one fourth of total exports. Therefore, country offers investment opportunities for direct investments as well as outsourcing and joint ventures with local companies. In Montenegro economy is based on tourism and services and potential for investment is offered in these sectors. Beside tourism, agriculture also has favorable conditions for growth. Serbia has investment opportunities in Information Communication Technology sector with highly skilled workforce, in agriculture sector with favorable climate and automotive sector. In other word, the Western Balkan countries offer many investment opportunities for the European countries, Turkey and Asia.

The author of chapter thirteen discusses the economic performance of the Balkans from the perspective of diversity. He emphasizes that the Balkan countries have suffered by being situated between the Western Block and the Eastern Block for nearly half a century during the cold war. In addition, the factor of religion is another main element in the region's conflicts. The region's economies are neither wealthy nor subsistence, but in between. The Balkan countries, except Turkey, with their population size and age structure are not expected to compensate EU's aging problem. The main problem in the Balkans is still ethno-religion one. The most important problem of the region for the world where everybody lives in is the illegal activities that occur over the region. The Balkan countries need to adopt their social and political systems to the western invented social, political and ideological values and systems. One very important instrument for this adaptation is education of a widely spoken European language, i.e., English, German or French. Turkey seems a very useful alternative for the region to contact to other goods and labor markets. Rising Russia is another important alternative to benefit in terms of foreign trade. The most risky point is the polarization of the countries. This means inevitable conflicts and hot fights both domestically and externally.

In chapter fourteen, the article offers a new perspective on the renewal of the Albano-Macedonian and Turkish relations, that is through the famous Corridor VIII. Through the history Albania, Macedonia and Turkey were traditionally bounded and connected by the famous roman path *Via Egnatia*, which not only represented an important transport, commercial and trade network but also a prominent intercultural link between peoples, different cultures and religions. *Via Egnatia* being a road of a millennium old tradition, which ended by the beginning of the 1st World War, leaving behind only a cultural and archeological heritage of what was once the biggest nexus between the East and West. Today, the revival of *Via Egnatia* is represented by the famous Corridor VIII, settled and established by the Pan-European Conferences held in Prague, Crete and Helsinki during the last decade of the past century. The author beleives that this Corridor is set to represent not only a multimodel transport network but also an axis for a possible development of energy and telecom-

munication networks, which will link the EU and overseas countries with the East Asia, through the Balkans. In spite of the nascent initiatives aimed to accomplish the delivery of the Corridor, crowned by the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2002 between Italy, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, still no concrete actions have been recorded during the past years, due to political and economic obstacles as well as to lack of financial constructions. Looking in future perspective through the lens of contemporary constellations of the International Relations and the World Order, she claims that the most truthful way of re-establishing the millennium bondages and traditional relations between the East and the West (that is between the countries of *Via Egnatia* axis, i.e. Albania, Macedonia, Turkey and other) is to strengthen and prioritize the existing inter-relations in a more marked European perspective, especially taking advantage of the Instruments for Pre-Accession of the EU and by lobbying for greater financial instruments from the future budget framework 2014 – 2020.

Last chapter gives an overview on the economic relations between Turkey and the Balkan countries by reference to the common history of the past as well as the present. Turkey's links with the other Balkan countries are long and strong, due to the fact that more than five centuries, these countries have been part of a common system within the Ottoman Empire. This fact enables these countries, even today after almost a hundred years of functioning as independent countries, to maintain these ties created for more than five centuries. Although today all of these countries main strategic goal is to be a member country of EU, the authors remind that we should not forget the common past. Within the occurring integration processes, structural adjustments take place in these countries, which may also contribute to create their competitive position in the international area. The basic element for establishing of these economic relations between Turkey and the other Balkan countries in the last century is Turkish-American relations especially after the Cold War when the United States of America (USA) emerged as a dominant power. On the other hand, the existence of people of Balkan origin in Turkey is another crucial factor that affects Turkey's Balkan policy. Owing to the waves of mass



migration to Turkey from the Balkans since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century up until now, one fifth of Turkey's population is of Balkan origin. During the crisis and wars in the Balkans, these groups were one of the most effective pressure factors in Turkey's policy towards the region.

In conclusion, we would like to thank, first of all, the contributors to this volume, in which without their input and research this work would not have assumed its present appearance. It is a happy privilege to acknowledge our indebtedness to those institutions which have either directly or indirectly contributed to this study, among them Ankara Center for Thought and Research (ADAM), Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) and International Balkan University (IBU). Neither publisher nor the editors are responsible for any shortcomings committed by the contributors.

**Mehmet Bulut**

**Mesut Idriz**

# RENEWAL OF THE ALBANO-MACEDONIAN AND TURKISH RELATIONS: THE PERSPECTIVES OF CORRIDOR VIII

Ana Nikodinovska<sup>1</sup>

As the theme of this publication and the seminar that it preceded *Is Past, Present and Future of the Turkish – Albanian and Macedonian relations* it seems natural to talk about relationships and connections between the countries of southeastern Euro-Asian axis. Although these three countries are geographically not directly related, but historically, sociologically, economically, politically and culturally they are part of a wider community. A culinary example of this existing bond is the sole presence of sarma in Macedonian and Turkish cusine or dolma in Albanian, or better yet the presence of cacik or taratur, baklava, burek, kofte and many other delicacies that give us the general idea of the undisputed interconnection.

The intensity of this historical relationship, and hence cultural, sociological, political and economic, is most apparent during the period of the presence of the Ottoman Empire in the region through the centuries. The Empire traditionally connected the East and West, uniting all countries along an endless customary Union. Today, the Ottoman Empire leaves behind many modern nations including its throne the Republic of Turkey, and countries that we speak of today, that is Republic of Macedonia and Republic of Albania. At the begin-

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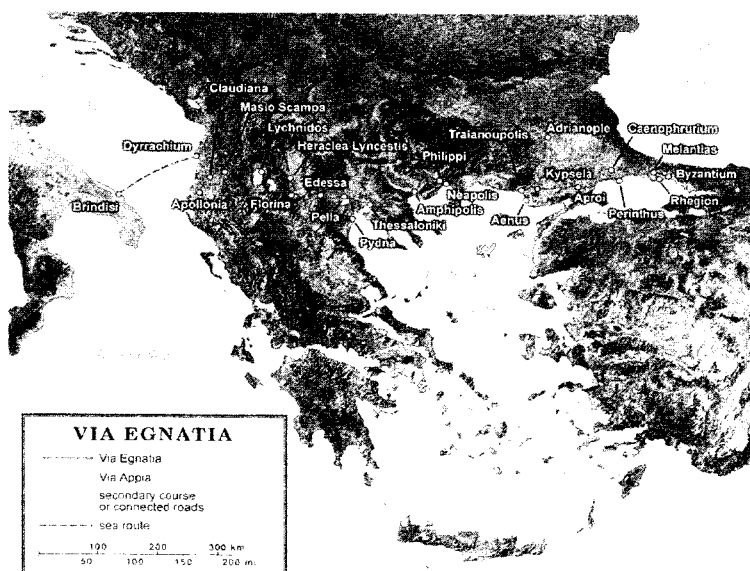
ning of the 21st century, we encounter these countries with characteristics of developed pluralistic political system and a functioning market economy, based on democratic society that respects human rights and fundamental values of freedom and the rule of law, and as such these countries perform fully and independently in international relations. Looking in a broader international context, these countries are present in many of the world's international organizations like the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and others, and certainly in the regional context, they are already member states or aspiring states for membership of the European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.

In spite of this vivid introductory presentation, the main focus of this writing is the famous Corridor VIII, not only because it connects Macedonia, Albania and Turkey but also because it has a far major reach including other states such as Italy and Bulgaria and other boundary states. Thus Corridor VIII represents an important segment of human existence and an even more important element of everyday life that affects us all.

Historically, transport and transport networks constituted the driving force of every society. Transport meant connectivity, trade, travel, purpose, prosperity. When we talk about Corridor VIII, it is essential to mention that its predecessor was the famous *Via Egnatia* road network which was established by the ancient Romans in the II century BC. The main purpose for the construction of *Via Egnatia* was to connect the West with the East and thus to connect the colonies of the old Roman Empire with the center. This route was an extension of *Via Apia* (Italy) with the Far East, which represented a link between the Adriatic Sea to the Aegean and which it extended through Dyrrachium, Lychnidòs, Herakleia Lynkestido, Thessalonica through Amphipolis, Philippi, Neapolis, Trainaopolis, Aproi, Perintus, Melantias until Constantinople (Byzantium) that is today's Istanbul, to the Black Sea. The road was built during 44 years, and in the years to come it represented the main road of a thousand years old tradition that made possible not only the spread of Christianity but also contributed to the establishment of a continuous tradition of trade, trans-

port and communication representing the core axis between the two civilizations of which Michele Fasolo speaks in his book *La via Egnatia I. Da Apollonia e Dyrrachium ad Herakleia Lynkestidos*, issued in Rome in 2003.

In order to revive this millennium old tradition and to establish entirely new relationships in contemporary constellations of international relations between the Balkan countries and the Asian countries with the European Union, the EU outlined and stipulated the construction of pan-European transport networks, including for us the most important, Corridor VIII, which restores the traditional links between West and East, and thus also the relationship between Turkey, Macedonia and Albania.

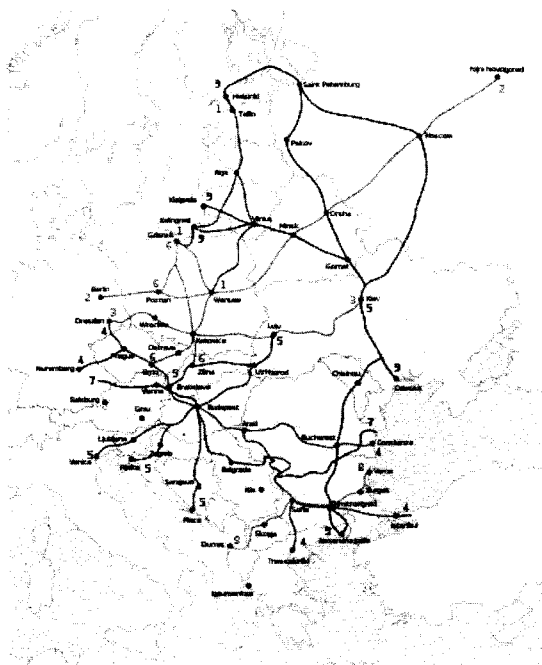


Picture n.1: Route of Via Egnatia

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Via\\_Egnatia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Via_Egnatia)

The idea of pan-European corridors was born after the fall of the Berlin wall and was developed within the three Pan-European conferences (held respectively in Prague 1991, in Crete in 1994 and in Helsinki 1997), and provides the establishment of 10 pan-European

corridors within Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The purpose of these Pan-European corridors is to successfully connect the former Eastern - European block to the broader trans-European networks provided by the European Union and the European integration processes.



Picture n.2: Map of the ten Pan – European Transport Corridors

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-European\\_corridors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-European_corridors)

Specifically, Corridor VIII represents a multimodal transportation system that runs along the east-west axis and consists of sea and river ports, airports, multimodal ports, roads and railways, with a total length of 1270 km in rail tracks and 960 km of roads. The draft of Corridor VIII stands little out from the original route of *Via Egnatia* and connects Bari, Durres, Tirana, Bitola, Skopje, Sofia, Dimitrovgrad, Burgas, Varna and through one of its branches it is associated with Corridor IV which relates to Turkey, through Dimitrovgrad and connects to Edirne and Istanbul.

The Corridor is not only a simple road transport network, but it is also an axis for the development of energy and telecommunications network which will connect the countries of the European Union with the Caspian basin, and which can provide reliable power sources such as the not very popular oil and gas. In this context, it's worthy of mentioning the proposed United States AMBO project for the construction of a pipeline and gas pipeline which is supposed to pass through Macedonia and Albania<sup>2</sup>.

The real story behind Corridor VIII consists not so much in infrastructure, as such, but in the way that the Corridor will facilitate the dissemination and the expansion of trade after its construction. It will provide far better access to world markets and to raw materials needed for land industries and furthermore, it will have even a greater significance since it will represent the vital artery that will facilitate communication between different cultures and religions and will also enhance intercultural dialogue between neighboring states. From a geo-strategic position, the Corridor will include intensive commercial traffic, which importance among other things, as mentioned above, can arise from the exploitation of energy resources in the Caspian region, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Further steps have been taken towards the realization of this framework. Thus, in 2002 a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between Italy, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, in base of which was created the Steering board (composed of representatives from the Parties) and a technical secretariat with its headquarters symbolically situated in Bari at Fier del Levante. This Memorandum outlines the common will of the parties plus the European Commission (which appears as an interested party) as well as sets the policies for undertaking further activities. Nonetheless, activities have been delayed because of difficulties to get through finance and also due to political and economic obstacles, such as the financial crisis that has threaten development in general.

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2 Another competitive project to AMBO is the so called *South Stream project* which instead bypasses these countries.

The common interests of these countries for the promotion of Corridor VIII are numerous. Besides the infrastructural development of a transport network (which includes road, rail and air infrastructure), they aim at creating a stable and prosperous region that would be fully integrated into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, as well as aim to achieve economic integration through the development of mutual trade, which in turn will again contribute to the rapid and successful integration into the single economic market. This shows off their clear European perspective and their wider interest towards the stabilization of the whole region. In addition, it should be noted the particular interest of Turkey towards establishing the Corridor, especially since Turkey's presence in Macedonia is marked by TAV airlines on Macedonian airports.

Within the European transport policy, in spite of the fact that the Pan-European corridors were *ab initio* financially supported (through funding such as IPA pre-accession instruments - previous ISPA, PHARE and SAPARD, and through additional loans from the European Investment Bank), currently they are not present at the Top 30 list of priority projects of the European Union, which are otherwise reserved for the priority lines of trans-European multimodal network. Furthermore, from the preparations for the construction of the new budgetary framework 2014 - 2020 it can be seen that the EU's focus is almost entirely turned towards internal transport integration with the newly arrived Member States, and that indeed some candidates risk remaining completely excluded from the proposal (as it is the case for Turkey).

Nevertheless, new international developments such as global climate change and recent unfortunate events that hit the Japanese coast and northern Africa, as well as the anticipation of the new Europe 2020 strategy, are starting to alter the European Union's priority axes. Furthermore, EU's previous experience with internal cross-priority transportation project (half of which are not completed) together with the proposals for revision of the Trans-European transport, brought the Ministers of Transport of the Union member states to conclude on this February's Ministerial meeting in Budapest, that the priority

focus should be reallocated towards projects that finance the so called core networks, which are environmentally clean, and that is the transport rail networks.

In light of these developments, the focus of the construction of Corridor VIII should be centered towards the construction of the railway network, which is fully complementary not only with the priorities of the European Union but also with the priorities of the countries concerned, especially Turkey which by supporting this project would achieve significant goals of environmental protection of the Bosphorus strait. Thus, all stakeholders concerned and engaged in this Corridor should take advantage of their privileged positions and negotiating skills and should use them to obtain financial agreements that will support this initiative. Especially, this could be possible by promoting a private – public partnership which in return could have major possibilities of financing such large infrastructure projects as Corridor VIII.

Instead of conclusion - a simple quote from an unknown author:

*“All of life is a journey. Which paths we take, what we look back on, and what we look forward to, is up to us. We determine our destination, what kind of road we will take to get there, and how happy we are when we get there”.*



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# **Turkish Albanian Macedonian Relations**

## Past, Present and Future

As a consequence of its geopolitical position, through the Ages, Turkish-Albanian-Macedonian relations displayed a distinct historical, cultural, and socio-economic homogeneity. A history of these regions in general is an inseparable part of the Eastern and the Western history and civilizations.

During the history, Balkan area has played the role of the bridge that connected Europe and Asia, independently of the location of the decision making center in one of these regions, respectively. And logically, if someone wish to harm or even destroy a system, firstly they must destroy these bridges.

Relations between Turkey and the Balkan countries, day by day are becoming more and more intense. Having in mind the fact that a long time has passed, more than one century, the period of separation from the common system of the Ottoman Empire, it need a substantial time to repair these relationships. Reparation of these relations requires a mutual determination and investments. It can be said that, from the Turkish side there is a good will and economic potential to play its role. Remains that the Balkan countries must see Turkey as a friend nation and not as the side of an empire that was over a century ago.

The present volume, comprising of fourteen chapters by contributions of various distinguished Turkish, Albanian and Macedonian academicians, is yet another work towards understanding the Turkish-Albanian-Macedonian relations by looking at the past, examining the present and assuming the future.

ISBN 978-605-68676-2-8



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